

Members

Sen. Thomas Weatherwax, Chair
Sen. Kent Adams
Sen. James Lewis
Sen. Richard Young
Rep. Markt Lytle
Rep. Robert Bischoff
Rep. Richard Mangus
Rep. Phyllis Pond



NATURAL RESOURCES STUDY COMMITTEE

Legislative Services Agency
200 West Washington Street, Suite 301
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2789
Tel: (317) 233-0696 Fax: (317) 232-2554

LSA Staff:

Bernadette Bartlett, Fiscal Analyst for the
Committee
Steve Wenning, Attorney for the Committee

Authority: IC 2-5-5-1

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 15, 2004
Meeting Time: 8:30 a.m.
Meeting Place: Culver Cove
Meeting City: Culver, IN 46511
Meeting Number: 3

Members Present: Sen. Thomas Weatherwax, Chair; Sen. Kent Adams; Sen. James Lewis; Rep. Markt Lytle; Rep. Robert Bischoff; Rep. Richard Mangus; Rep. Phyllis Pond.

Members Absent: Sen. Richard Young.

Call to Order. Sen. Thomas Weatherwax called the meeting to order. After introducing the committee, Sen. Weatherwax asked the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to begin the discussion pertaining to the work of the Citizen Advisory Council on Captive Cervids.

Overview of the Work of the Citizen Advisory Council on Captive Cervids. Glenn Lange, Chief of Wildlife of the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, provided an overview of the work of the Citizen Advisory Council on Captive Cervids. The Council was composed of ten members who represented various interest groups. Mr. Lange noted that not a lot of consensus was reached within the group. He suggested that there was not enough time to come to a consensus that might be the basis for legislative recommendations. (Mr. Lange referred to Exhibit I, which is a copy of the final report of the Council.)

Deer Farming in Indiana. Don Blinzinger, Bose Treacy Associates, representing the Indiana Deer Farmers Association, provided an overview of the history of deer farming. He noted that a core issue pertains to who owns captive deer. Elk are not regulated. With respect to hunting deer behind a fence, he discussed a proposal that would allow for those in the business to

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

remain in business and to be able to hand down the business to family members, but that the business could not be passed on beyond the family. Deer meat cannot be sold in Indiana. (See Exhibit II.) Eddie Ray Borkholder highlighted aspects of the day-to-day business of deer farming. He raises deer on eight acres. Deer that are sold are sold for breeding purposes or are sold as “shooters”.

Frank Keeton, Elk Breeders Association, provided an overview of elk farming. He highlighted the markets for elk, such as velvet antler, elk meat, hard antler, trophy animals, and tourism. (See Exhibit III.) Dave Dimmich discussed the future of cervid farming and alternative agriculture in Indiana. He noted that cervids are considered personal property by many state agencies, but that the DNR consider deer wildlife. He predicted that in 2 to 3 years, Chronic Waste Disease (CWD) in deer will be a non-issue. The cervid industry does not condone canned hunts, but unfortunately a canned hunt is not defined. The DNR sponsors deer hunts in state parks. At Ft. Harrison there was one hunter per 7 acres. (See Exhibit IV.) John Newsom, Indiana Farm Bureau (IFB), indicated that based on a voice vote, a majority of 300 members wanted deer to be recognized as livestock. (See Exhibit V.)

Brigid O'Donoghue, United Special Sportsman Alliance Bio-Tec Research, Inc., explained the “Make a Wish” program that allows children to participate in hunting events. Her company studies genetic processing. She has 80 hours of footage pertaining to the impact of CWD in deer. The DNR does not provide free permits or licenses, but shooting preserves that she has worked with have paid for the permits. Without the deer and elk farms, the children would be unable to hunt at the preserves. Shooting preserves provide more flexibility in timing, better access, room and board, in-house meat processing, and blinds accessible to children with disabilities.

Chuck Bauer, Izaak Walton League Board member, stated that the League is opposed to deer/elk farms for the domestication and “canned hunts” which violates the public trust and true sportsmanship of a fair hunt. He noted that deer can be patterned using baiting. Deer belong to all citizens. Wild and captive deer must be separated in order to prevent the spread of disease in the wild. Concentration and the moving of deer increases chances of disease transmission. Imports of deer and elk should be banned, and the risks of diseases should be monitored. (See Exhibit VI.) Doug Allman, Indiana Deer Hunters Association, explained that the Association does not support hunting behind high fences.

Paula Yeager, Executive Director of the Indiana Wildlife Association, indicated that the Association opposes canned hunting, not deer farming. Fifteen states have banned canned hunts. Other states have restrictions, such as Tennessee which does not allow private ownership of white tail deer. She submitted a list of core issues (See Exhibit VII). She expressed her concern about the spread of disease, such as CWD, from animals imported into private facilities, noting that the disease could then spread to the wild population. In 2001, Wisconsin spent \$12 million trying to manage the disease. She indicated that once the disease is in the wild population, it can not be contained. She presented an article on the health risks associated with shooting enclosures (See Exhibit VIII). She presented another article that indicates that a National Institute of Health researcher suspects that escaped deer carried CWD into the wild. (See Exhibit IX.) She also noted that proponents of canned hunts changes their focus based on the audience they address: white tail deer are domestic animals when addressing the DNR and Board of Animal Health; but wild to hunting customers. One provider of hunting indicated that preserves are for “entertainment and convenience.” White tail deer are not profitable for meat, but for hunting. The economic benefit of free-range hunting equals \$137 million. Local economies also benefit.

Dick Mercier, Indiana Sportsmen's Round Table, stated that his organization, which is the largest organization of sportsmen in Indiana, does not support canned hunts. His organization

does support fair chase, but does not support private ownership of white tail deer. His organization has never opposed private ownership of non-native cervids. Phil Ohmit, Hoosier Conservation Alliance (HCA), indicated that if hunting is allowed behind fences, the DNR should regulate the hunt and develop the rules. However, the HCA is opposed to canned hunting because the deer does not have the right to ingress and egress.

Gary Haynes, Board of Animal Health, stated that CWD was found in the wild herd in Wisconsin in 2001. CWD is in the same family as mad cow disease. There is no live test for CWD. In April 2002, the Board prohibited the import of cervids for over one year. The Board has tested for CWD in various parts of the state, but has not found the disease to date. There are 354 registered herds. Herds can consist of a couple of deer to several hundred. Jack Hyden, Indiana Beaglers Alliance, read emails in support of high-fenced hunting. Glenn Roberts, Culver farmer, noted that hunters have shot his equipment and buildings, and that guns have been pointed at members of his family. Laws are not enforced.

John Goss, DNR Director, concluded the discussion by noting that over 300,000 hunting licenses are sold each year. The DNR is adding acres available for hunting. There is no shortage of hunting opportunities. There are currently too many deer in the state parks. The DNR is committed to the doctrine of fair chase.

Adjournment.. The Committee adjourned at approximately 12:30 p.m.